

Sanskrit and Nationalism: A Vedic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

To create a balanced and civilized society we must depend upon the great culture and tradition of the past which is brilliantly depicted in the ancient texts of Bharata. Through this, a noble Nation can be built up and a strong Nationalism will be established by the people. For all these development, Sanskrit particularly the Vedic literature will be the source of knowledge, to enhance and cultivate the ideas within the mind of the people. So Sanskrit and Nationalism are the basic elements for a healthy nation.

KEYWORDS: Sanskrit, Nation, Nationalism, Veda, Bharata, Sūkta, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Mantra

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INTRODUCTION

The term Nationalism is connected to the word nation which refers the community of people having mainly common descent, history, language etc. forming state or inhabiting territory. Again the term nationalism denotes the patriotic feeling, principles etc. or the policy of national Independence. The above said meaning we may get in Oxford dictionary. In general, we may say Nationalism means the deep loyalty towards the nation as well as the fellow citizens and a force to become united. Now the question is how this unifying forces and the concept of loyalty to towards the Nation is being analyzed in the texts of Sanskrit more specifically in Vedic literature. This is an attempt here to discuss and highlight the Nationalism in connection to the references of *Veda-s* and *Upaniṣad-s* and vedic related texts.

1. Declaration of the term *Bhārata* in *Rgveda*:-

Rgveda is considered as the first noted text of Sanskrit literature and profusely accepted as *Dharmagrantha* - the religious text of *Āryans* - the first civilized man of *Āryabhūmī Bhārata*. In *Rgveda*, we may come across with the term *Bhārata* as uttered in many places. By considering and analysing the etymological meaning of the word *Bhārata*, critics used to give their opinion in different ways. In the second *Mandala* and seventh *Sūkta* of *Rgveda* the

word *Bhārata* uttered as the *Rtvija* associated to *Bharata*. The Mantra goes as –

श्रेष्ठं यविष्ठ भारताग्ने दयुमन्तमा भर।
वसो पुरुस्पृहं रयिम्। *Rgveda*. 2.7.1

To give a better clarification Ācārya Sāyana says – भरता ऋत्विजः। तेषां सम्बन्धी भारतः। ते अधर्यादिभिः मथनहविः स्तोत्रादिना व्याप्रियमाणत्वात्। Hence it is understood that the name of *Rṣi* as *Bharata*. In another commentary of Venkata, it says as - भारत! एष हि देवेभ्यो हव्यं भरति इति ब्रह्मणम्. It means the fire (*Agni*) named as भारत (*Bhārata*) as it makes reach the *Havi* to the other deities.

Again, in third *Mandala* and fifty *Sūkta*, the word *Bhārata* is uttered as *Janapada* associated with the Sage Visvāmitra. The mantra goes as –

य इमे रोदसी उमे अहमिन्द्रमतुष्टवम्।
विश्वमित्रस्य रक्षति ब्रह्मदेवं भारतं जनम्॥ *Rgveda* 3.53.12

In Śāyānabhāṣya it is said, विश्वमित्रस्य मम इदम् इन्द्र विषयं ब्रह्मस्तोत्रं भारतं भरतकुलं जनं रक्षति पालयति।

भारतम्। भरत शब्द उत्सादिः। त्रित्वादादयुदात्तः। It means, Lord Indra protects *Bhārata* - the dynasty of *Bharata* with the prayer of Viswamitra.

In fourth *Mandala* of *Rgveda*, the term *Bhārata* is denoting the meaning as *Bhartā*. The *Mantra* of *Rgveda* as –

तस्या अग्निभारतः शर्म यंसज्जयोक् पश्यात्
सूर्यमुच्चरन्तम्।
य इन्द्राय सुनवामेत्याह नरे नर्याय नृतमाय नृणाम्॥
Rgveda.4.25.4

The commentator *Sāyaṇācārya* says भारत हविषो भर्ताग्निः। प्राणो भूत्वा प्रजा धारयन् भारतः इति वाजसनेयकम्। It means, the *Bhartā* - the leader Agni, provides happiness to the *Yajamānas*.

Again in sixth *Mandala*, the *Mantra* as –

अग्निरग्निभारतो वृत्रहा पुरुचेतनः।
देवोदासस्य सत्पतिः। Rgveda.6.16.19

Acārya Sāyaṇa says भारतः हविषां भर्ता दिवोदासस्य एतत्संजस्य राजः। Here it is narrated *Bhārata Agni* as protector of the universe. In another *Mantra* it is said as –

उदग्ने भारत दयुमदजमेण दविदयुतम्।
शोचा वि भाष्यजर। Rgveda – 6.16.45

Here the term *Bhārata* as represent the name of Agni to sustain and enlighten the world with his bright rays.

As a whole the term *Bhārata* is used in *Rgveda* approximately seven times by denoting the meaning as epithet of *Agni*, the dynasty or *Rṣikula* of *Bharata*, a mediator to make reach the *Havi* to the Gods and also indirectly showing the meaning as a place or continent.

From these above said discussion we may say that the country *Bhārata* is uttered in *Rgveda* to show the identity of *Āryabhumī* – the place of civilized person. The reference itself shows the antiquity as well as the glory of the nation *Bhārata*.

2. Rāṣṭracetanā in Rgveda:-

In 10th *Mandala* of *Rgveda* we come across with the references to signify the glory of state. It is said that the whole country may be united just because of the language (*Bhāṣā* or *Vāṇi*). The Language is an instrument to unite the country or nation in a single thread like. As *Rgveda* says –

अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसुनाम्। Rgveda. 10.125.3

It means, I am the creator of state and unite others into one. In another *Mantra* of *Rgveda*, it said that language has the tremendous power to create or generate life of the whole world. It is like air to generate *prāṇa* within the objects. It is said as –

अहमेव वात इव प्र बामि आरभमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा।
Rgveda -10.125.8

It is understood that a prosperous country will excel the nobility when the people of the same country are united. To prove this concept, in 10th *Mandala* of *Rgveda* it is said –

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी। Rgveda. 10.191.3

The people of the country should have possessed the quality to understand others and collectively they should be following the noble path. Then only the country will prosperous and the people will enjoy their life happily. The exact reflection we may get from the above said *Mantra* of *Rgveda* which shows the *Rāṣṭracetanā* and also the attitude of the people who live in the same country.

3. Rāṣṭravāda in Atharvaveda -

Basically service to the state or country by showing deep respect and dignity is a part of the prominent responsibility of the citizen of the same state. The idea of the exact thought has been reflected in many texts of ancient days. Somadeva suri a prominent scholar and writer of *Nitivākyāmrta* declares, by showing the great significance of *Rājadharmā* and its benefits to the citizen by gaining *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* if it is followed. It is said that salutation to the state, from which *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* technically known as *trivarga* is gained.

अथ धर्मार्थकामफलाय राज्याय नमः।

This idea has been frequently uttered in *Artharvaveda*. Each and every activities of the state is made by the collective organisations of the people. It is named as *Samiti*. It means collectively assemble in one place for a common goal and feel proud to be the part of it. It is also considered as assembly of the people (*Rāstrasabhā*) who elect their king. This exact content is reflected in *Atharvaveda* as –

त्वां विशो वृणुतां राज्याय। Atharvaveda – 3.4.2

It is the duty of the *Samiti* to elect the king and members of the *Samiti* used to take collective decision for the same. It is said –

ध्रुवाय ते समितिः कल्पतामिह। Atharvaveda – 6.88.3
नास्मै समितिः कल्पेत। Atharvaveda – 5.19.15

Again it is also discussed in *Atharvaveda*, to maintain the dignity and unity of the *Samiti* for which collective prayer has made by the people. The *Mantras* are narrated as –

सं जानीध्वं सं पृच्यध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते॥
समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं व्रतं सह चित्तमेषाम्।
समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि समानं चितो अभिसंविश्वम्॥
समानी ब आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति॥ Atharvaveda – 6.64.1-3

For the sake of the country, the above said prayer is made by the people as their mind, thought, action and aim are to be same and united. This exact reference of *Atharvaveda* shows the Nationalism or the concept of *Rāshtravāda*. The same *mantra* is also uttered in *Rgveda* (10.191.3) as already discussed earlier.

Further it is said in *Atharvaveda* that, there are two daughters of *Prajāpati*, one is *Samiti* and the second one is *Sabhā*.

सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने।
येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु॥

Atharvaveda – 7.12.1

So like *Samiti*, *Sabhā* also plays a vital role in state administration by maintaining its high respect and regards. As it is said –

नमः सभाभ्यः सभापतिभ्यश्च। Śuklayajurveda -16.24

In many places of *Prthivīsukta* we may recognise the concept of Nationalism. To show the affinity to the mother earth, the sage declares that, this earth is my mother and I am her son. माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः। This concept shows that the people on this earth should have thought to realise the beauty of the world and their position and also to feel proud that they are all the blessed sons of this mother earth. Then only they will realise the value of Nationalism.

4. Rāshtravāda in Upaniṣad -

A person who is highly broads in nature, whose thoughts are extremely noble, such type of person always enjoys a happiest life. Because, he understands that the whole universe is the creation of Almighty. His essence is existing in each and every objects of the universe. As per the direction of Almighty, he enters into a peaceful life without having a greedy on the property of others. In this connection *Īśavāsyopaniṣad* declares –

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद् धनम्॥ Īśā -1

Everything in the universe abides in the Supreme Being. By realizing this one should cast off the desires that rise in the heart, for example, the thought of possessing what is enjoyed by another. Happiness comes only by the giving up of desires and attachments.

From this, above said discussion we may say, the quality of a *Sādhaka* as it is narrated in this *Mantra*, is highly notable and he who realises the ultimate truth of the universe and feels joy always about the happiness of people and the glory of the state.

In *Kenopaniṣad*, a beautiful description we may get about the equality of understanding by the *Rṣi* on Supreme Brahman (*Paramātman*). In this specific *mantra* it is explained that a *Sādhaka* who gets the attachment with *Paramātman* there after he feels the presence of Almighty in all the objects of the universe. It shows the equal thoughts of every object as the *Paramātman* is omnipresent, He who resides in everywhere. It says –

हैनं सर्वाणि भूतानि सम्बाञ्छन्ति। Kena – 6.4

From this we may get the equal thought of understanding about the objects of world, which is needed for a *Sādhaka* to realise the presence of *Paramātman* in each and every objects. The exact ideas are also reflected in *Śrimadbhagavatgītā* frequently.

ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समर्दशनः। Gītā -6.29

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम्। Gītā -6.28

समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम्। Gītā – 6.29

So by understanding this concept is nothing by a *Sādhaka* but to see and realise the Universe in the path of nobility.

Again the same attitude as reflected in *Śāntimantra* of the *Upaniṣad*, where both the teacher and the student are praying before Almighty to get the prosperity by the means of protecting their life, food for survival, achievement of mighty power and strength and the most important demand is to get a life without having enmity. As the *mantra* says –

ॐ सह नाववतु। सह नौ भूनक्तु।
सह वीर्ज करवावहै। तेजश्वि नाबधीतमस्तु।
मा विद्विषावहै। ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः।

Om, may God protect us both (the teacher and the student) (during the journey of awakening our Knowledge),

May God nourish us both (with that spring of Knowledge which nourishes life when awakened),

May we work Together with energy and Vigour (cleaning ourselves with that flow of energy for the knowledge to manifest),

May our study be enlightening (taking us towards the true essence underlying everything), and not giving rise to Hostility (by constricting the understanding of the Essence in a particular manifestation only),

Om peace, peace, peace (be there in the three levels – *Ādhidaivika*, *Ādhibhautika* and *Ādhyātmika*).

This *Mantra* exactly indicates the equal moment of both the teacher and the student towards path of prosperity. A strong bond can be visualised between the teacher and student through this *mantra*. They are not so selfish in their attitude to get happiness individually, where they stand equally to pray for the prosperity before the Almighty. This nature shows the openness which help to create a noble society. As a result *Rāṣṭracetanā* or *Rāṣṭravāda* can be established in a better way.

Again another *Śāntimantra* denotes the nature of mankind to enter into a spiritual world by accepting the all the good things in his day to day life. He prays before Almighty to get all prosperity and happiness. He proclaims that whatever he listens that is to be well and good, whatever he visualises that is to be wise and moreover all his expectations are to be auspicious. The *Mantra* says as –

ॐ भद्रं कर्णभिः श्रृणुयाम देवा भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः।
स्थिरैरुडगैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तन्भिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः॥
स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्वदेवाः।
स्वस्ति नस्ताक्षर्यो अरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो वृहस्पतिर्दधातु॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः।

Aum! O gods, may we hear auspicious words with the ears;

While engaged in Yajñas,

May we see auspicious things with the eyes;

While praising the gods with steady limbs;

May we enjoy a life that is beneficial to the gods.

May Indra of ancient fame be auspicious to us;

May the supremely rich (or all-knowing) Puṣā (god of the earth)

Be propitious to us;

May Garuḍa, the destroyer of evil,

Be well disposed towards us;

May Vṛhaspati ensure our welfare.

Aum! Peace! Peace! Peace!

This *Mantra* shows the universal happiness of the mankind by adopting the noble qualities and maintains harmony within the surrounding where he resides.

Further, the instruction is also given in *Kathopaniṣad* to establish a strong and noble society through the *mantra*. As all we know, the life of human being is so precious. (*Naratvam durlabham loke*). How long we are here in this universe, we must act accordingly as guided by our *Śāstras*. In *Kothopaniṣad* it is said –

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया

दुर्ग पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति। Katha – 1.3.14

This *Mantra* is a command or an order to the whole citizen of the country. Get ready to march forward, be conscious and get the divine blessing from the spiritual leader, expose yourself how far strong you are. There are the noble lines uttered through this *mantra* because the life of self is so secret. You must prepare internally to visualise the divine bliss through your journey. Through your noble action, you must inspire others to see the beautiful world. Then only the *Rāṣṭracetanā* will be inculcate in the mind of the people. Swami Vivekānanda, a Divine personage, who believed in the command of this particular *Upaniṣadic Mantra* and inspired himself to do understand the value of life. This is the symbolic representation to establish Nationalism through the *Upaniṣadic Mantras*.

Hence it may conclude that the concept of Nationalism as reflected in Vedic literature is highly informative. The Vedic mantras are not only meant for invocation of Vedic deities but also they extend the different thoughts of human life in connection to the state. The *Mantra* teaches us about patriotism, compassion, dignity, pride, loyalty and understanding. Again these mantras make the individual trained and fit for the state or society to gain a smooth life. Finally they guide human being to follow the path of Nationalism and prove him to become a responsible citizen of the country.

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